

MY NEW NEIGHBOUR:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is community sponsorship?

Community, or private sponsorship is an alternative method of refugee resettlement that operates alongside government sponsorship programs. It typically relies on individuals, community groups or businesses to select a refugee, often based on family or other community connections, and pay the resettlement costs that would normally be paid by government.

What are the benefits of community sponsorship?

The benefits of private sponsorship include improved community integration, strong bonds between refugees and sponsors, engaged communities and the fostering of positive attitudes towards refugees.

Importantly, it should also provide additional numbers to a country's annual refugee intake hence increasing the overall resettlement pool worldwide.

Doesn't Australia already have private sponsorship?

Yes but it is fundamentally flawed. Currently Australia has the [Community Support Programme \(CSP\)](#), which commenced on 1 July 2017, after a four year community proposer pilot (CPP). It permits individuals, community groups and businesses to sponsor eligible refugees to resettle in Australia. There is a [limit of 1000 sponsorship places](#) per year.

The program sits within Australia's broader [humanitarian program](#), which permits a total of 16,250 refugees to be resettled per year.

What are some of the key problems with

Australia's current CSP?

The three serious issues with Australia's approach to private sponsorship are:

1. it comes out of the humanitarian program, so it does not provide any additional places;
2. it is very expensive, particularly compared to similar models, such as the Canadian model
3. while in theory it is open to all to sponsor, if the CPP experience is anything to go on, it is likely to be very restrictive in who can actually sponsor, so unlike Canada, for example, community groups, church groups, university groups and ordinary citizens will find it extremely difficult. (Under the previous CPP close family were prioritized, while under the CSP it is likely to be businesses).

What are the costs?

Under the current CSP there are two Visa Application Charges, an initial fee of \$2,680 (per person), and a second fee of \$16,444. There is then an assurance of support of \$20,000 for adult applicants and \$10,000 for each family member of working age (the assurance of support covers any expenses in the first 12 months). The applications must go through a Proposer Organization (APO) which will also charge a fee, around \$11,000.

Added to this are the cost for airfares and medical screenings.

It is estimated that for a family of 5 the upfront cost will be \$92,844 (if all the bond is repaid after 12 months this will be a final cost of \$52,844)

How does this compare to other countries?

Australia's CSP costs are three times the cost of sponsoring someone under the Canadian program.

For [Canada the cost is estimated to be approximately C\\$13,500](#) for one individual, or approximately C\$30,900 for a family of five. Sponsors are not required to pay government fees or visa costs. The government covers healthcare, education and other integration programs. Refugees are eligible for social security benefits in their second year.

How else does the Canadian program differ?

The major difference between the Australian and Canadian approaches is that the places offered under the Canadian model are additional to other government programs. [Canada is expecting to offer 16,000 private sponsorship places in 2017](#), in addition to 9,000 government-assisted and blended sponsorship places.

How can Australia justify the high costs?

For Australia private sponsorship has been seen as a cost saving measure, rather than a life saving measure.

The cost-saving element of the program has been criticised by Amnesty and others, with the government [expecting to save \\$26.9 million over 4 years](#) by shifting resettlement costs to the community without reinvesting those savings into increasing resettlement opportunities.

What is an APO?

The Approved Proposing Organisations (APOs) are individuals, community groups, or businesses that have been authorised by the government to propose applicants who are in humanitarian situations overseas. APOs are also responsible for lodging visa applications and ensuring the provision and management of settlement services to these people following arrival in Australia.

All private sponsorship applications must go through an APO, who charge a fee for their service.

Under the previous CPP there were 5 APOs, however they were asked to re-apply under the new CSP and other organisations were also asked to apply. Despite the CSP starting in July 2017 and the announcement of the APOs scheduled to be announced in October 2017, to date there are no APOs. As such it has not been possible to sponsor anyone under the CSP.

What if someone, sporting group, business or church organisation wants to sponsor a refugee or their family now, what steps do they need to take next?

Unfortunately until the government appoints the APOs it is currently not possible for anyone to be sponsored under the CSP.

Who can be sponsored?

The proposed individuals must meet the definition of a refugee or a humanitarian entrant (defined as a person living outside their home country and who is subject to substantial discrimination amounting to a gross violation of human rights).

Under the new CSP however, the primary applicant must meet the job applicant requirement. This will include requirements that the primary applicant is:

- aged 18-45
- can speak English 'well' (defined as level 2: can speak English well enough to deal with basic social and work situations) and
- has a recent work history, tertiary qualifications or can otherwise demonstrate capacity to find employment.

This is likely to exclude those who are particularly vulnerable and in particular need of resettlement.

The job-ready, language and age requirements are not a feature of the Canadian system.